

## Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

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EO 11652: N/A  
TAGS: SHUM TH  
SUBJECT: ASSISTANT SECRETARY DERIAN MEETS WITH THAI INTELLECTUALS

1. ON JAN 16, ASSISTANT SECRETARY DERIAN MET INFORMALLY WITH A GROUP OF EIGHT UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS CONCERNED WITH CIVIL RIGHTS AT THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AT CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY IN BANGKOK. MS DERIAN WAS ACCOMPANIED BY DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY SIEVERTS AND FSO DAVE KENNEY. THAI ACADEMICS PRESENT AT THE MEETING INCLUDED KRAMON TONGTHAMACHAT, DEAN OF POLITICAL SCIENCE; AND PROFESSORS KUSUMA SANITWONG, WITHAWAT KHONGKHAKUN, CHAIYANAN SAMUTWANIT, KATOM AREEYA, WANITA KRAIROT, SERIN PUNNAHITANON, AND ARONG SUPTHASAP.

2. DEAN KRAMON, WHO IS PRESENTLY SERVING ON THAILAND'S CONSTITUTIONAL DRAFTING COMMITTEE, ASKED MS DERIAN TO EXPLAIN THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S EMPHASIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS, WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE CRITICISM THAT US HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES WERE SIMPLY A DEVICE TO ATTACK RIVALS IN THE COMMUNIST WORLD. MS DERIAN EXPLAINED THE ADMINISTRATION'S POLICIES AND ASSURED THE GATHERING THAT CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IS A FUNDAMENTAL PART OF US FOREIGN POLICY.

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3. DURING THE DISCUSSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THAILAND WHICH FOLLOWED, THE THAI PROFESSORS AIRED GRIEVANCES CONCERNING RESTRICTIONS ON POLITICAL ACTIVITY . THEY EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT; 1) POLITICAL ACTIVITY IS STILL SEVERELY RESTRICTED, AND THAT TO PREPARE FOR THE PROPOSED ELECTIONS, PEOPLE MUST HAVE THE RIGHT TO BEGIN TO ORGANIZE POLITICAL PARTIES; 2) THE NEW CONSTITUTION

(BEING DRAFTED) WOULD PERMIT THE PRIME MINISTER TO BE CHOSEN FROM OUTSIDE THE ELECTED PARLIAMENT; 3) MUCH OF THE COUNTRY IS UNDER MARTIAL LAW, HAVING BEEN DESIGNATED AS SENSITIVE (READ INSURGENT) AREAS BY THE RTG.

4. PROF. KOTOM REQUESTED US ASSISTANCE IN TWO AREAS:

1) TO PERSUADE THE RTG TO OPEN THE THAI POLITICAL SYSTEM BY REMOVING ALL RESTRICTIONS ON POLITICAL ACTIVITY AND ORGANIZING, AND 2) TO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR A SEMINAR ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, WHICH IS TO BE HELD IN TOKYO (AT SOME UNSPECIFIED FUTURE DATE).

5. MS. DERIAN TOLD THE GROUP THAT SHE HAD EXPRESSED HER CONCERN AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE RTG THAT THE NEW THAI GOVERNMENT CONTINUE TO MOVE IN THE DIRECTION OF A MORE OPEN SOCIETY, SPECIFICALLY TO INCLUDE GREATER POLITICAL FREEDOMS.

6. CONSIDERING THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE TOPICS DISCUSSED AND THE OVBIOUS COMMITMENT TO THE CAUSE OF ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS SHARED BY THE GENERALLY YOUNG ACADEMICIANS IN ATTENDANCE, THE MOOD OF THE GATHERINGS WAS ALMOST, THOUGH NOT QUITE, LIGHTHEARTED. IN THEIR INIMITABLE THAI FASHION, PARTICIPANTS SPICED THE DISCUSSION WITH HUMOR AND PUN. BUT TOWARD THE CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING DR WITHAWAT SAID HE WANTED TO MAKE IT CLEAR TO MS DERIAN THAT, ALTHOUGH MOST THAI LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INTELLECTUALS HAVE NOT LOST THEIR ABILITY TO LAUGH, THEY ARE SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT EXISTING ABRIDGEMENTS OF POLITICAL RIGHTS AND REMAIN SKEPTICAL THAT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT WILL TAKE THE STEPS NECESSARY TO RESTORE FULL POLITICAL FREEDOM. WHITEHOUSE

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## Message Attributes

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